Veteran police officer retires
after 46 years of service
By Liz Dadson
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After 46 years of service, South Bruce OPP sergeant Dave Quinn is hanging up the handcuffs and putting away the gun.

A police officer since 1966, he served in several areas before coming to Kincardine in 1987 where he was on the Kincardine Police Force until 1994 when it was amalgamated into the South Bruce OPP.

The career has had its good moments and bad, he says. "If you like the job, you just do the work."

Quinn served in the Canadian Army with the 1st Canadian Guards from 1963-66 and did one United Nations tour in Cyprus.

He then joined the Petrolia Police Force until 1969 when he moved to the Point Edward Police Force. Two years later, he joined the Hanover Police Department where he spent four years before becoming police chief at the Chesley department. From there, he came to Kincardine.

Quinn has earned a number of awards during his career, including the United Nations Medal Cyprus, Canadian Peacekeeping Medal, Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal, and the Canadian Medal for Bravery.

He has been involved in the community throughout the years: past member of the recreation board, baseball coach, hockey coach, foster parent, Royal Canadian Legion member, and past-chairman of the Bruce County Children's Aid Society.

Quinn says he enjoyed serving with the small town police forces. "Back in 1966, there were 167 police forces, now there are about 40."

Very straight-forward and opinionated, he says that policing has changed dramatically over the years.

"The Charter of Rights has made a lot of crooks happy and made a lot of lawyers rich, but for the average guy, it's not done much for him," he says.

"We spend too much time analyzing things. We should do the work and then analyze it later. I used to think we always dealt with bad guys but we're actually dealing with good people under bad circumstances. Until officers figure that out, it's going to be a long career."

Quinn says a lot of good young officers have joined the force and everybody joins for a different reason.

"When I joined, I was ex-military," he says. "I certainly didn't join for the money, there wasn't any."

However, it was more than he was making in the military. He applied to two police forces - Listowel where he would make $3,000/year but worked straight nights for a year; or Petrolia where he would make $3,200/year and work three shifts. He chose Petrolia.

Many of the forces back then had anywhere from one officer to six. "You basically needed a Grade 10 education and be able to see over the hood of a car in order to enforce the law," says Quinn. "The first question I was asked was if I could fight."

He had a "Zap" which was a leather strap with a spring on it and a whack of lead pellets. His gun was carried in a cross strap that never stayed in place. He had six bullets in his gun which was a straight .38 and he carried extra bullets in his pocket.

"You couldn't carry anything in public that would be considered intimidating," he says. "I wouldn't want to see policing go back to those days, but I think we've gone too far the other way."

Of all the places he worked, Point Edward was his favourite.

"It was interesting with an international border. You'd have one guy working the village with 20 liquor establishments; that kept you busy.

"When I was in Chesley, the police phone was in my house. We'd sit down at the kitchen table for dinner and people would walk right in and start talking about policework."

Quinn says the changes in policing have resulted in different expectations of police officers today.

"There are certain things we can do and things we can't," he says. "Older people expect the cops to show up and do something. But things are more complicated now."

Today, he says, the South Bruce OPP has a huge coverage area, including Kincardine and Walkerton. "A lot of officers don't get to know all the people they should know. People have changed. They're more 'into' themselves and have this sense of self-entitlement."

Young people are a lot different today too, he says. "They have no coping mechanisms. All kids do is text and Facebook. We get eight to 10 complaints per week about Facebook."

Quinn came to Kincardine after he and the Chesley council had a difference of opinion on how the department should be run. He enjoyed working with the town policeforce in Kincardine and then joined the OPP when the two were amalgamated.

"That has worked well for the young officers," he says. "With the smaller police forces, there was little or no advancement.